A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, January 12. 1712.

OUR Parties now are not only divided one against another, but the Animosity is come to that height, that we are perfectly Raging, and if I should call it Madness, I think you cannot blame me; for sure there never was a Time when equal Fury was seen among Christians of the same Nation, Religion and Interest, unless that Feud ended in War and Blood.

This, I confess, gives any Man who has a Concern for the whole, that has any Thing of the general Interest in his View, a Melancholly Prospect, and makes Wise Men willing to draw their Hands out of the Quarrel, and let each Side alone to carry on their Rage to what Extreme they think fit.

I am now directing my Prospect to the Treaty of Peace, which we look upon as begun; I know the Hopes of some People are Founded upon an Expectation, that it will come to nothing; that most of the Confederates will send no Plenipotentiaries thither, and that they are resolv'd to see and venture it, whether the *English* will make a Peace over their Bellies, or no.

What those People can aim at, who would not have a Peace at all, let the Conditions be what they will, is most easie for any one to determine; God grant such may be

be disappointed; A Good Peace every honest Man wishes for, a Bad Peace no honest Man can desire; I am upon two Generals, which I dare maintain against all the World.

1. That we want a Good Peace, and that very much.
2. That we may have a Good Peace, if we will.

I have spoken to the last a little, and shall return to it again; but must speak a Word or two to the first of these.

I know and wonder at the desperate Rage of those, whom I hear affirm it, and we have many among us of them that positively Assert, That Peace is made already; That the Queen knows it, has Agreed to it; That it was Sign'd here in *October* last, and that all the rest is only a Farce acting over by the Ministry, to make it come in Form; and a great deal more such as this, which no Man, that has any Sense of Duty to the Queen, or Love to his Country, can hear with Patience, or without Detestation, as well of the Thing, as of the manner of Reporting it.

The Time when the Truth of this shall come to light is so near, the Discovery of the Fact so absolutely Necessary, and that so quickly, that I think it needs to have nothing said; but that a little Patience will do the Thing, a little Temper, a little waiting will tell us, whether this is true, or whether it is the greatest piece of Wickedness in the Raisers and Spreaders of those Reports, that has been known in this Age.

But I come to speak a Word or two, to the need we have of Peace; and here I must own I am none of those, that think we cannot carry on the War; that the Nation is Exhausted, and will be Ruin'd if we go on; I by no means approve of that Way of Arguing, which to Convince our own People of their need of Peace, lays open our Weakness, and shews our Nakedness to our Enemies —— We have yet Tax'd none of our *Eatables* and *Wearables*; a General Excise is not yet laid; 6 *d.* a Bushel upon our Corn, and 6 *d.* a Yard upon our Woollen Manufactures, and the like in proportion; and 1 *d. per* Pound on our Flesh; these Articles, *and many such*, would raise vast Funds still, if Necessity drives us to Exert our Utmost Strength; but when I say this, I am far from saying we do not want a Good Peace; nay, those very Taxes being in our Thoughts, prove it: But after all this, not to make you Melancholly with lamenting your Entail of Debts upon the Ages to come, and telling you that the Land must for ever be Tax'd to redeem Trade; without Encouraging the Enemy by laying open our Distresses, let me only referr you to the Article of our Commerce; let any Man look in there, and tell me whether we want Peace or no; and here, I hope, I may talk to you a little.

Innumerable Instances may be given of the Decay of our Trade, and of the want we are in, of a little Respite to Relieve Trade, and give it Time to breathe and recover —— I'll wave long Enlargements on Particulars; Go to the Beginning and the End of Trade, the Manufacturer and the Shopkeeper, these furnish your Export, and those disperse and dispose of your Import.

Go to the Manufacturer in the Country, and ask two Questions; Are the Poor Employ'd? Is the Wool Consum'd? the Negative is prov'd undeniably, by the Demonstrating the Affirmative; the Poor are Starving and Ruin'd, and three Years Wool lies in Hand unwrought, tho' the Price is sunk a third part; sad Truths! which many lament, but none will deny.

Go to your Shops, and here, methinks, the very Figure your own Streets make in Trade, here in *London*, might strike your Thoughts, and Convince you, as you go along: To see how real Trade has abandon'd your Streets, and Trifles and Toys supply the Places; 'tis a true Observation, that Men grow shabbily gay, as they grow poor, not as they grow Rich; the Reason

Reason is, because Pride is oftner the Companion of Poverty than of Wealth; mark then in the chief Trading Streets of this great City, and see how Trumpery and Gaudy Trifles fill up the Vacancies, the Gaps and Intervals, from whence your departed Substance of Trade is fled.

Like the *Jews*, who wept at the Remembrance of the first Temple, let any Man that knew this City of *London* about 30 Years ago, tell me how different a Face has your Great Streets of *Cornhill*, *Cheapside*, *Lombard-street*, the parts about the *Exchange*, the Wharfs and Water-side, from what they had then: The City, like an *Old Cavalier after the Restoration*, all tatter'd and ragged, shews the Wounds and Scarrs it has got in the War, and the Citizens rather talk of the Trade they had, than of what they now have.

There's the fine and famous Street of *Cornhill*, since I remember, fill'd with Wholesale-Men, and Rich Shopkeepers, if I mistake not, now you may see there, two or three most famous Perriwig-Makers, five or six spacious Coffee-Houses, three or four Illustrious Cake-Shops and Pastry-Men, one or two Brandy-Shops, and the like; and these not in the small Shops, or meaner parts of it, but in the Capital Houses, of great Rents and large Fronts, in the very prime of the Street: The Alleys, where the smaller Places were full of Notary Publicks, Offices of Assurance, and such People who Managed the necessary Appendices of Trade, now they are crouded with Stock-Jobbing Brokers, buying and selling of Bear-Skins, and Tricking and Sharping to get Estates, out of the Fall and Fancy of their Neighbours Offices, to buy Tickets, Tallies, and Annuities, the Bane of Trade, and the Resort of those, who finding no Room to Employ their Money in Trade, live upon the Interest of it, till Times mend, and Peace restores the Liberty of Commerce.

I could carry you through the whole City, and shew you the like Prospect; *Lombard-street*, like a desolate Beauty, forsaken of her Lover, just breaths, as I may say, under her Ruins; it is true, the Bank enjoys the Embraces of her Ancient Proprietor, Paper-Credit, and she Languishes in a daily Consumption, but 'tis *the War*, *the War*, gives the Killing Blow to all.

From thence go into *Cheapside* and *Fleet-street*, *Pater-Noster-Row*, and *Paul's Church-Yard*; Cane Chair-Men, Looking-Glass Shops, Leather-Guilders, take up the great Shops of the Woollen-Drapers; Ale-Houses, Cooks, Cheese-Mongers, Head-dressers, and Pamphlet Shops, supply the Mercers in *Pater-Noster-Row*; Pastry-Cooks, Snuff-Sellers, Toy-Shops, Perriwig-Makers, and Picture-Shops, take up such a Gang-Way, that one would think the *Cloysters* were remov'd into *Cheapside*, and *Bartholomew-Fair* into *Fleet-street*.

I omit the Shops shut up, more than ever were heard of; the Number of Bankrupts that croud our *Gazette's*, and refer them to the long Room in the Custom-House, and the Wharfingers Key by the Water Side, where you may Air yourself most Composedly a great part of the Day, and doubt not, *if we go on*, but a fine Row of Trees may be Planted there, for the Merchants Ladies to walk under, instead of *Drapers-Gardens*.

These are standing Testimonies of the Growth of our Trade, and how little need we have of a Peace.

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